THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

AUTUMN 1961

MUSEUM NEWS

THREE NEW MASTERPIECES

Three important paintings from Holland's Golden Age are here announced as recent acquisitions by this Museum. Each contributes in a different way to our knowledge of the art and life of the Netherlands during the 17th century.

The Museum's collection of Dutch art has grown considerably during the past fifteen years, and these three pictures will increase substantially the stature of the collection.

All are well-known masterpieces which have been published extensively in the literature of art history. Their acquisition for Toledo will be of interest to art historians everywhere, and a source of continuing pleasure and satisfaction to Toledoans.

Otto Wittmann, Director

MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

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AUTUMN 1961 ***New Series: Volume 4, Number 4***

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann

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COVER: NICOLAES MAES. *The Happy Child. Oil on panel. 43¼ x 31½ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1961.*

NICOLAES MAES. *The Happy Child (Detail).*

NICOLAES MAES: THE HAPPY CHILD

It is not surprising that Rembrandt was considered the author of *The Happy Child* by several eminent 19th century experts on Dutch painting. As the German art critic Wilhelm Bode wrote in 1919, "There is scarcely a pupil of Rembrandt's who approaches the master so closely as Nicolaes Maes does . . ." in a series of pictures painted in the early 1650's.

Our picture which is unsigned and not dated, is one of the finest of this period. It was considered by the Dutch scholar Hofstede de Groot in his catalogue of 1916 to be "one of the master's (Maes) best pictures." The confusion of Rembrandt with his pupil Maes in this instance is understandable.

Nicolaes Maes (1634-1693) was born in Dordrecht, Holland. Most of what we know about his life comes from a biography by a Dordrecht writer, Houbraken, written in 1719, only 26 years after Maes' death.

Maes appears to have been precocious. He is said to have learned drawing at an early age from a mediocre Dordrecht artist. When he was probably about fourteen he was sent 40 miles north to Amsterdam to study with Rembrandt. He stayed until about 1653, when he returned to Dordrecht, married, and

established a successful career as a painter of humble, everyday life. In 1673 he returned to Amsterdam where he remained until his death at the age of 59 in 1693.

Maes' pictures are usually grouped into three rather distinct periods. The pictures of the first period comprise those done on a fairly large scale and strongly under the influence of Rembrandt. They are few in number, generally considered to be his finest, and thought to have been painted before approximately 1655. Of these pictures, Bode wrote, "It is no wonder that those of them which have no signature were formerly considered to be Rembrandt's."

The second period began about 1654, when the artist turned to painting a series of small domestic interiors. He continued to paint these intimate, popular pictures until about 1659.

His work of the third and last period consists of a large output of portraits. Begun as early as 1656, portraiture seemed to occupy almost all the artist's time from 1660 until his death. Houbraken wrote that Maes' portraits were in great demand, which must be true for several hundred of them are still in existence, many of the later ones on the small scale. Two other paintings by Maes in the collection of this Museum, *At the Fountain*, and *Portrait of a Gentleman*, date from this last period.

NICOLAES MAES. *The Happy Child (Detail).*

These later pictures are so far from the rare early pictures, that at least one 19th century critic thought that there must have been two different artists with the same name! We now know that this is not true, but the early pictures have always been more prized than the later. Hofstede de Groot wrote of the early career of this artist, "During the first ten years of his artistic career he painted masterpieces of imperishable merit, which, few in number, are amongst the most cherished pictures in public and private collections, and exercise their charm in a threefold way, in composition, color, and lighting."

All writers on Maes have spoken of the artist's famous vermilion reds and of the warm brown tones, both of which appear in Rembrandt's pictures of the 1650's. Most people have been attracted to Maes' early pictures by their sentiment, their warmly human qualities, the homely basic appeal of their subjects which were usually women and children.

The Museum's new acquisition has for many years been considered one of the artist's masterpieces, and has been mentioned in most of the significant accounts of Dutch art. Our picture is first mentioned by John Smith in 1836 who records it as in the collections of Smeth van Alpen (1810) and Lebrun, Paris (1811). Smith attributed it to Rembrandt. Waagen records the picture

REMBRANDT. *Titus (Detail). Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.*

as by Maes and as being in the collection of Howard Galton, Hadzor Manor, Droitwich, Worcestershire, by 1850. He wrote of it, "singularly fresh and artless in conception, and of great power of color." Later Hofstede de Groot (1915) records the picture as having passed through the collection of Prince Paul Demidoff, San Donato, Florence (sold 1880) to the collection of Baron Edouard de Rothschild, Ferrières, France. H. Gerson (1952) in his book on Dutch painting wrote most recently of the picture, illustrated it, and indicated that the picture was at that time in the collection of Mme. la Baronne Edouard de Rothschild, Paris.

The picture, painted on a thin oak panel with vigorous bold brushwork which Maes handled almost as skilfully as his master, Rembrandt, represents a smiling blond child seated on the lap of one woman while holding an apple toward a second woman. The life-sized figures are characterized with strong lights and shadows and powerful warm color, in which red predominates, together with yellow and white.

At a time when Rembrandt was painting some of his greatest single portraits and religious compositions, Maes, with a technique very close to his master, was content to paint subjects of great charm if less profound in conception. Rembrandt often used the common people of Holland as subjects in his Biblical compositions, while Maes, in our picture, certainly implies no religious or Biblical meaning. The child is dressed in a simple robe. Suspended from the child's right shoulder is a gold chain and medallion often seen in other pictures of children at this time. The woman wears a north Holland dress and a white cap. The other woman at the right is probably a maid or nurse. Happiness and contentment radiate from the warmly hued picture.

Maes married, when only 20, the middle-aged widow of a pastor who had one child. They had three other children. Is it possible that the subject of our picture could be the artist's wife and one of the children? Probably not, since most critics feel that although the picture is not dated, its proximity to Rembrandt's style suggests a date no later than 1655. Certainly the brushwork in our picture is closely influenced by such pictures as Rembrandt's portrait of his son, Titus, which is signed and dated 1655.

Whatever the exact subject of the Museum's new acquisition, the picture is remarkable as one of Maes' rare masterpieces, painted when this precocious artist was in his very early 20's. It will undoubtedly become one of the most popular pictures in this Museum.

Otto Wittmann

AELBERT CUYP: *The Riding Lesson (Detail).*

AELBERT CUYP: THE RIDING LESSON

He has created—and in art that is enough—a fictitious, quite individual formula of light and its effects. He had that uncommon power of first imagining an atmosphere and then making of it not only the vanishing, fluid, and breathable element, but also the law and, so to speak, the ruling principle of his pictures. Eugène Fromentin, 'Cuyp,' in *The Masters of Past Time.*

Before one of the splendid, sun-filled landscapes of Aelbert Cuyp's maturity, we have a feeling of contentment and optimism which is gratifyingly confirmed by all we know of his life. Cuyp was born in 1620 at the old town of Dordrecht, a few miles south of Rotterdam, where a number of his family had

followed the painter's profession. He was the only son of Jacob Gerritsz Cuyp (1594-about 1652), best known today as a capable portraitist. It seems likely that he first worked with his father. During early years, or later, he may have travelled on the Maas, the river surrounding Dordrecht that appears in so many of his pictures. Perhaps somewhere up its valley or where the Rhine crosses into Germany he saw the hilly country which enlivens *The Riding Lesson* and other imaginary landscapes painted for dwellers on the flat Dutch plain. The inheritance Cuyp received after both parents died was augmented by his marriage in 1658 to Cornelia Bosman, a wealthy widow. During the next twenty-five years his position as a leading citizen of Dordrecht is confirmed by a series of important civic posts: a deacon of the Dutch Reformed Community, member of the high court and hospital board regent. So far as we know, Cuyp spent virtually his whole life at Dordrecht, dying there in 1691.

Cuyp may have owed much of his freedom from money worries to good fortune, but solid success as a painter must also have counted for his position in local society. Thus his life was very different from all too many Dutch painters of his time to name only two masters of landscape, Meindert Hobbema and Jacob Ruisdael, who were unable to earn a living by their pictures alone. Unlike most artists, Cuyp was not a specialist, his versatile, prolific output found a steady market. It is a repertoire of Dutch life. There are portraits, still-lifes, bird and animal pictures, genre scenes and a few Biblical and historical subjects attributed to him. But Cuyp was primarily a landscapist and whether pastures with cattle, shipping in the Maas, or horsemen are his subject, it is the warm, hazy sunlight that one remembers. Light was the Dutch landscapists' common theme, but the golden atmosphere which Cuyp controlled so masterfully was his alone.

Documentary evidence regarding Cuyp's work is virtually non-existent, and there is no certainly dated landscape after 1639. However, his general development has been clarified on the evidence of the paintings themselves, although many questions yet remain unanswered. The contacts with his father's landscapes and probably those of his uncle, Benjamin Cuyp (1612-1652), showed at an early stage that his natural bent lay in this direction. However, the great influence on Aelbert's early years was Jan van Goyen (1596-1656), the foremost landscape master of the older generation, and a man who by any standard must be ranked as one of Holland's key artists. Whether or not Cuyp studied with him we do not know, but as van Goyen's numerous Dordrecht views are dated from the 1630's on, there would have been ample opportunity for the younger man at least to see his work. Van Goyen's *View of Dordrecht* of 1649 in Toledo displays his command over space and vaporous atmosphere, achieved with an austere, subtle color range and delicately rendered details. We are fortunate, too, in having one of Cuyp's van Goyenesque landscapes of the 1640's, the lovely *River View of Dordrecht, Morning*. While the predominantly brown tone and general organization indicate his debt to van Goyen, Cuyp's individuality already asserts itself in the golden light that veils the scene, suf-

fusing every part with its gentle radiance.

Toward 1650, Cuyp's style underwent a radical change only to be explained by his having felt the impact of Jan Both (about 1618-1652). Jan Both returned from Italy in 1641 to be the leading painter of Italianate landscapes in his generation, settling in his native Utrecht, long the center of Dutch relations with the South. His idyllic, spacious interpretations of the Roman countryside, which played a significant role in the development of the Dutch landscape school are beautifully represented by the Museum's *Italian Landscape with Travellers.*

The majestic, serene pictures of Cuyp's maturity, such as *The Riding Lesson,* unite characteristic details from Dutch life with the Italianates' pearly light, luscious color and glistening paint. *The Riding School* is a masterpiece of this period, in which Cuyp combined richly varied elements, placing them as on a stage with side wings, then leading from one charming detail to the next, the eye is drawn to the horizon and finally to the splendor of the sky above. The firmly drawn figures Cuyp places nearest us are painted in strong, dark colors; their vivid appearance against the light emphasizes his softly toned distances. Is the grey horse being broken or taught one of the period's fancy

AELBERT CUYP. *Horsemen and Herdsmen with Cattle. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (Widener Collection).*

AELBERT CUYP.
The Riding Lesson.
Oil on Canvas.
Signed lower right:
A. cuÿp. 46¾ x 67
inches. Gift of
Edward Drummond
Libbey, 1960.

gaits? It is hard to say, and one feels Cuyp is more interested in making them part of an intricate scheme than in telling a story.

The Riding Lesson seems exceptional in the extent to which Cuyp introduced motifs reminiscent of the poetic land beyond the Alps, although some of these Italianate elements are rendered in terms of what he had seen in Holland. The broken columns and picturesquely decayed farmhouses come from the classical world of Both and Nicolaes Berchem (1620-1683), and the shepherds' dress seems more Italian than Dutch. In addition, a fascinating architectural transposition is presented by the church before which a market is getting under way. Its tower, cupola and façade arcade are closely parallel to those of the Romanesque Mariakerk in Utrecht, pulled down in 1813. We know its appearance in Cuyp's time from several views by the architectural draughtsman and painter, Pieter Saenredam (1597-1665), and there is a drawing of the polygonal apse by Cuyp in the British Museum. A detail of a Saenredam painting includes the main elements seen from the west. Cuyp has flattened the roof, suppressed later Gothic elements and raised the arcading. He then added a half-round apse like the one still in the Valkhof at Nijmegen, a fortress and town which appear in several Cuyp views. In short, he gave the church a more southern look. Continuing this fantasy, Cuyp took the building out of the city and put it down in a pastoral setting that is given a note of humor by two splendidly Dutch statues whose robust forms are no Roman exiles but well-fed local deities from a patrician garden.

The fashionable clothes of the rider who directs the lesson suggest a date well on in the painter's known career, around 1660, or slightly after. A Cuyp in America which shows many points of resemblance with ours, including the general scheme of composition and happy scaling of figures, is the *Horsemen, Herdsmen and Cattle* in Washington. Riders are conspicuous in both pictures, but Cuyp avoided the marked awkwardness in drawing and proportions that are apparent when he was obliged to give greater prominence to mounted figures in his many equestrian portraits of later years.

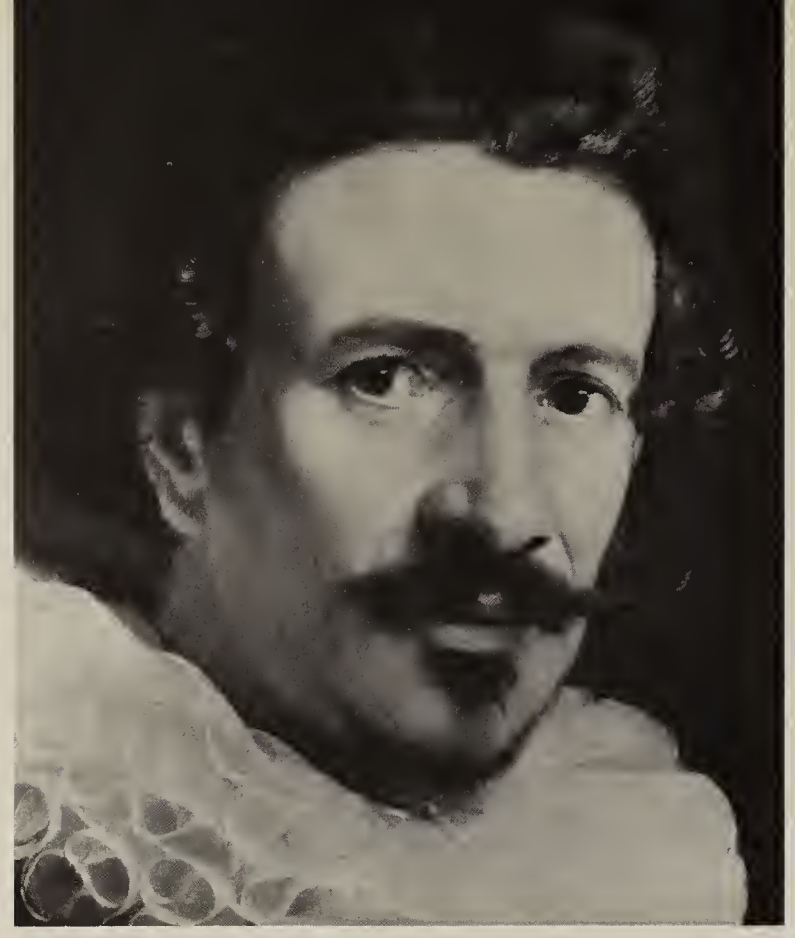
Judging from the large number of surviving works, his versatility and eminence in Dordrecht life, Cuyp must have been well patronized by his fellow citizens, though his fame remained local. Yet in the 18th century he was little thought of in Holland, perhaps because his compositions and brushwork were not in the over-elegant detailed Dutch taste of that time. It was the English, so often in the forefront of collecting, who first valued Cuyp at his true worth. Perhaps appreciation of his luminous, opalescent skies was conditioned by their esteem for Claude Lorrain, whose grave idealizations so influenced 18th century British taste in landscape. That this influence was not confined to "men of taste" is evidenced by the high regard in which the pioneer of British landscape, Richard Wilson (1713-1782), held Cuyp. Wilson's *The White Monk* in the Toledo Museum shows his marked sympathies with the older man.

Though his name was known in England before 1790, Cuyp became celebrated only after the vast number of pictures torn loose by Holland's economic difficulties during the Napoleonic wars, were brought across the Channel. By the 1830's, virtually all the glowing productions of Cuyp's maturity were in Britain. It is only rarely, even after two world wars, that these paintings which have always enjoyed special favor there have returned to the Continent or come to America. *The Riding Lesson* is first recorded in 1850, when it was seen at Hopetoun House near Edinburgh by the German connoisseur, Gustav Waagen. It remained the property of successive Earls of Hopetoun and Marquesses of Linlithgow until sometime after 1909 when it was sold to the French branch of the Rothschild family, whose legendary art collections have remained little known.

While this superb Cuyp will take its place as Toledo's outstanding Dutch landscape, it joins an already distinguished company, extending from Avercamp to Ruisdael, van de Cappelle and Hobbema, each a master whose own interpretation of the land, sky and waters of Holland marks a major achievement of the Golden Age. *The Riding Lesson* will be a neighbor of our pictures by Turner and Constable, the 19th century English masters who studied and admired Cuyp and whose own revolutionary explorations of light's magical qualities pointed the way to Impressionism.

William Hutton

PIETER SAENREDAM. *The Mariakerk at Utrecht (Detail). Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam.*



THOMAS DE KEYSER. *The Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild (Detail).*

THOMAS DE KEYSER. *The Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild (Now destroyed). Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg.*

THOMAS DE KEYSER. *The Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild. Oil on canvas. Signed and dated on chair: TDK (monogram) AN 1627. 50⅛ x 60 inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1960.*

THOMAS DE KEYSER: THE SYNDICS OF THE AMSTERDAM GOLDSMITHS' GUILD

The syndics or officers of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild, peering out at us across the gulf of three centuries, confront us with what was most typical of their time and their country. Four proud and independent individuals are realized in strongly characterized portraits. These portraits, as were the men themselves, are bound together in a carefully wrought union which surpasses the sum of its single units. Thus in 17th century Netherlands the guild and the group portrait flourished.

Those qualities which made Thomas de Keyser (about 1596-1667) the foremost portraitist of his day are here patently obvious. The composition is masterful. An arm and a hand on either side neatly bracket the composition, while the hands as a group, leading the eye both in and out of the picture in an inverted V, play a rhythmical counterpoint to the four heads. An ingenious combi-

nation of standing and sitting postures removes the heads from a straight line-up; yet the positions of the sitters do not seem stiff or contrived. They seem quite natural to a group intently joined in convincing us of the quality and craftsmanship of their product. The eye is led round and round the group; a strong diagonal composed of two heads, an arm, and three hands leads us again through the center of the group until we are once more turned back by the restraining action of the brackets.

The color harmonies strike the restrained chords prefered by the Amsterdam burghers. Cool blue-grays and blacks in the clothes are played against the warm, earthy green of the background and the dull green of the tablecloth. This dark setting puts into relief the pattern of bright flesh tones and linen ruffs spaced so the spectator's interest will not remain trapped in the faces, but travel throughout the composition. A single strip of red enlivens the chair back. The paint itself is uniformly opaque, at times applied in broad, flat areas as in the background, or touched in with minute, feathery strokes to suggest exact patterns of light and shadow as in the four different styles of neck ruffs.

De Keyser's vision concentrates on the optical appearances of things. He is not as concerned with the three-dimensional structure the mind can reason out as the underlying support of forms as he is with the surface stretched over that support which the eye perceives. Although a strong light falls on the four figures from the upper right, it does not illuminate a sculptural block of men. It passes lovingly over the rich satins, the gleaming silver, and the elegant tulip pattern of a most fashionable suit.

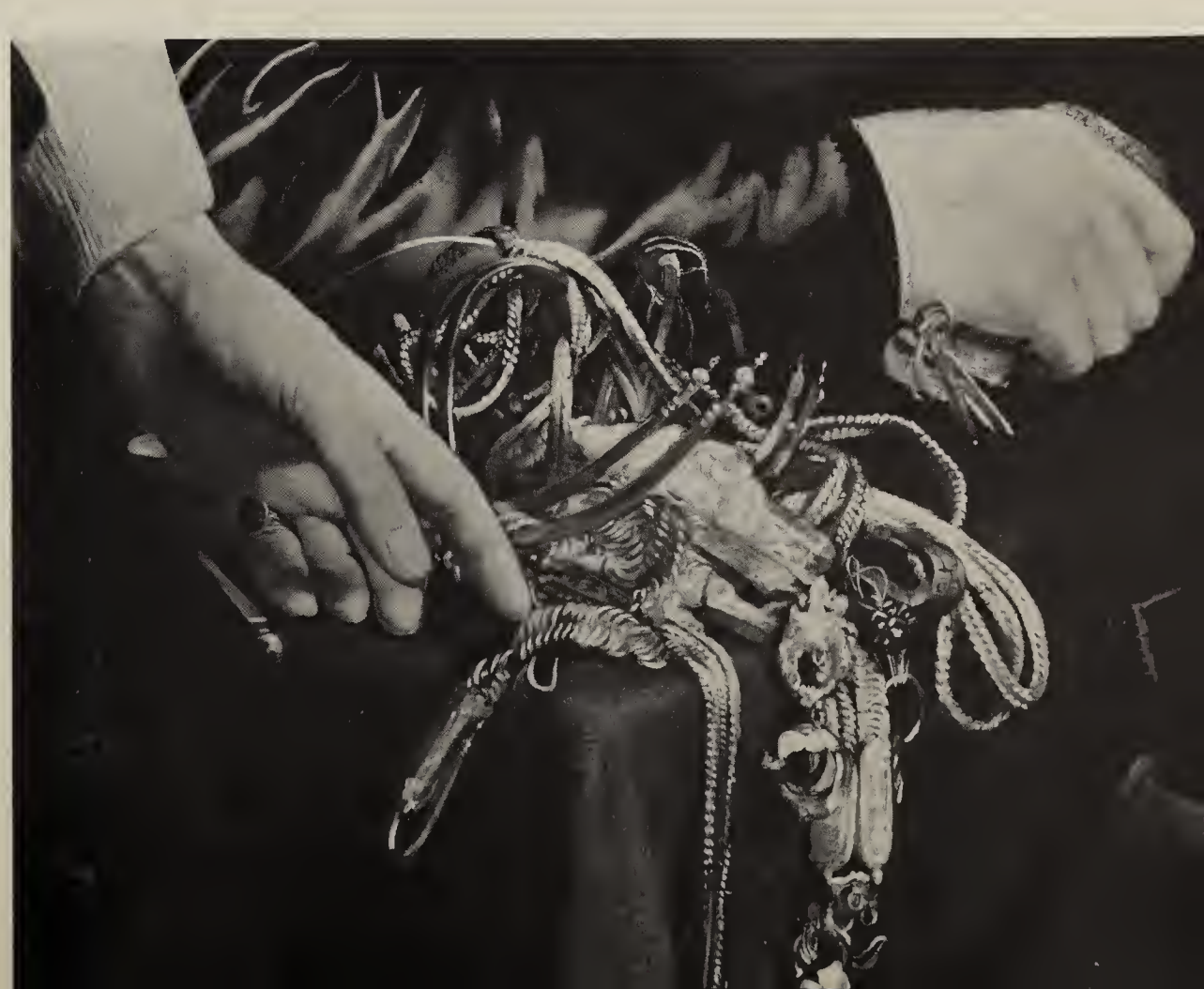
This suit is worn by Loeff Vredericx, head assayer of the Guild and the Standard Bearer of Amsterdam. A year before painting the *Goldsmiths' Guild*, de Keyser painted a single portrait of him in this latter role which now hangs in the Mauritshuis in The Hague. Second from the left is the second assayer, Alexander van der Hoeve, the eldest of the group, and seated at the right is the Dean, Anthony Tavart of Brussels. The remaining syndic is unidentified at present.

Vredericx holds with tongs a cupel, or shallow porous cup used in assaying. The smouldering metal to be assayed was heated in this piece of mutton bone. Any lead would melt and oxidize, forming a molten litharge which would be absorbed, together with any other oxidized impurities into the cupel. Gold and silver do not oxidize, but remain in the cupel, forming a small bead of 'bullion' which is weighed. Under his left hand, on the table, is a pair of pincers, and he points to a most intriguing pile of silver trappings. Part of the pile would seem to be a silver bridle, and what looks like a gold signet ring hangs from the piece which descends on the right. Van der Hoeve holds a plate of touch needles. Sometimes the metal to be assayed was rubbed against a touchstone, and the color of the marks thus obtained compared with the marks made by the needles, which had a known gold or silver content. The plate is inscribed at the top AETA SUA 45.

Anthony Tavart holds a silver girdle, conspicuously displaying a device which has in it a pattern similar to the mark of the Amsterdam Gold and Silversmiths of the early years of the 17th century: three X's enclosed in a doubly marked oval surmounted by a crown. The device in the picture would be right-side up before Tavart's eyes. On Tavart's chair appears de Keyser's monogram, AN(NO) 1627, and the further inscription AETAS SUAE 44. De Keyser would have been only 30 or 31 in 1627, so the 44 must refer to the age of Tavart, and the 45 on the touch needle plate to the age of Van der Hoeve.

Formerly in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg, France, was another group portrait by de Keyser, also called *The Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild* and painted the same year. Six other men are shown holding various tools of the assayer (including both a touchstone and touch needles) and objects best described as fine silverware. The handling of the figures is very similar, although minute comparisons are no longer possible, as that painting was destroyed by fire in 1946.

The two groups represent the probable division of gold and silversmiths into two guilds: the makers of plate-ware, represented in the former Strasbourg picture; the other, makers of linked and chained objects, represented in the Toledo picture. De Keyser, son of the architect-sculptor Hendrik de Keyser who designed the Amsterdam Stock Exchange and did the tomb of William of Orange of Delft, grew up in the tradition formed by the preceding generation of Amsterdam painters. Unlike the schools of Haarlem and Utrecht, Amsterdam was not under the foreign influence of either Flanders or Italy. In this commercial heart of the Dutch commercial empire, an aggregate of painters strove to please their burgher patrons with straightforward, realistic pic-



THOMAS DE KEYSER. *The Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild (Detail).*

tures. They especially developed the decorous, truthful portrait. Amsterdam was the generating center of much that was typical of 17th century Dutch art.

Under the influence, if not the tutelage of Cornelis Ketel (1548-1616) and Aert Pieterszoon (1551-1612), de Keyser favored severe color harmonies and a tight style of brushwork suitable to factual reporting. As he matured, however, he loosened up the rather stiff composition of his predecessors and injected a life-like verve into his subjects. Atmosphere began to creep into his settings, flesh became more luminous, and hard surfaces began to relax under more painterly brushwork. To this period belongs the Toledo painting. It was the work of this same period that was to influence the young Rembrandt when he came to Amsterdam in 1631.

De Keyser's most significant contribution is what he added to the development of the group portrait. The very first of this kind of painting, done by Dirk Jacobszoon in 1529, introduces us to the problems inherent in composing such a work—for it was, in essence, individual portraits grouped, and not primarily a military, banqueting, or genre scene. Jacobszoon strings the heads out like so many beads along a string. Barendszoon in 1562 hit upon the idea of having the group of people doing something, and grouped his civic guards around a banquet table. Ketel broke the static, frozen presentations of such scenes by adding movement. It remained for de Keyser to inaugurate the greatest epoch of group portrait painting.

He was the very first to achieve in addition to the exterior or compositional unity of the picture, an interior, psychological unity binding his personages into meaningful unity with one another. With de Keyser, the group portrait is lifted to the realm of great art, where the world within the picture frame has a structured spiritual universe as well as an ordered physical one. He thus opened the way for the later achievements of Hals and Rembrandt in their world-renowned group portraits.

The group portrait is a specifically Dutch genre. It owes nothing to foreign influences, and remains unique with Dutch art. It commemorates the distinctive role of burgher and guild in the development and government of the Republic of the Netherlands, whose national device bears a symbolical sheaf of arrows, tightly bound together and unbreakable.

Quiet, interior, humanistic unity is the hallmark of the greatest Dutch art, and this is the very key to the achievement of the successful group portrait. Most of these portraits are still in the committee rooms of the guilds and institutions where they were originally intended to hang; some are in neighboring Dutch museums; a few have traveled abroad. This great masterpiece was once in the English collections of Sir Audley Neeld and Philip Vos before passing to the W. J. R. Dreesmann Collection, Amsterdam. This *Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild* may be unique in American collections and is indeed an important addition to The Toledo Museum of Art's collections.

Anne K. Horton

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